

13 March 1981

SIG Meeting - Sinai Security Negotiations
Saturday, 14 March, 1100 hours

Memo to ADCI

TABS

- A Discussion Paper
- B Talking Points
(Egyptian View)
- C Talking Points
(Israeli View)
- D Special Analysis
- E Map

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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

NFAC 1416-81
12 March 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Acting Director, National Foreign Assessment Center

FROM: [REDACTED]
Assistant National Intelligence Officer for NESA

SUBJECT: Sinai Security Negotiations [REDACTED]

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1. While neither the NIO/NESA nor I have been involved in previous Interagency Group discussions concerning Sinai Security Negotiations, we concur in the judgments of the draft paper, particularly the implication that commitment of US forces will be essentially open-ended. Such provision will likewise set a precedent for possible future US involvement in similar forces elsewhere in the region. [REDACTED]

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2. Although US participation in the Sinai force would serve to reinforce Arab and Israeli perceptions of a firm commitment to the peace process, it should be approached with great care. President Sadat has invested considerable personal political capital - both domestic and international - in the Camp David process. One of his primary goals is reassertion of Egyptian sovereignty over the land because, for Egyptians, ownership of land takes on obsessional overtones. Memories of and popular antipathy toward British occupation and more recent Soviet bases in his country remain powerful latent forces. Thus it is important that the US avoid both words and deeds which could reasonably be linked to those 'bad old days'. [REDACTED]

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3. For the Israelis history also plays a role. As a buffer, Sinai has always been an important component in Israeli defense planning. Moreover the Israelis clearly recall the 1967 failure of UN forces to limit Nasser's forward deployments there. The decision to return the area to Egyptian control is still subject to deep misgivings by many Israeli strategists -- both military and civilian. Of particular concern are the modern airfields at Etam (east of Al Arish) and Etzion (northwest of Elat) and the Sharm as Shayk fortifications which overlook the Strait of Tiran. Unless the Israelis believe that the proposed security force will play a guaranteed 'trip wire'

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function they are unlikely to be very forthcoming in the negotiations. These and other issues are discussed in greater detail in the talking points which follow at Tabs B and C.

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4. As an item of peripheral interest, the following figures apply to potential candidate light infantry US units for the proposed security force. The units described are from those earmarked for the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF). Both would require a degree of task organization to improve their structural limitations in so far as organic mobility assets are concerned.

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USMC Infantry Battation (U)

Army Airborne Battalion (U)

Officers: 43 USMC; 3 USN
Enlisted: 853 USMC; 65 USN
Vehicles: 52

Officers: 38
Enlisted: 689
Vehicles: 93

5. No formal agenda for the SIG has been received. The Discussion Paper -- Tab A -- provides the frame of reference for the meeting.

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(Tabs A, B, & C are in the two briefing books provided to Robert Gates' office on 12 Mar. 81)

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SENIOR INTERDEPARTMENTAL GROUP MEETING ON
SINAI SECURITY NEGOTIATIONS

DISCUSSION PAPER

Issue for Decision

The Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty calls for the establishment of a United Nations Force upon Israel's final withdrawal from Sinai in April 1982 to ensure that the provisions of the Treaty are carried out. As part of the Treaty package, President Carter gave both sides a letter stating that in the event the Security Council was unable to take action to establish a UN Force, the United States would take the necessary steps to ensure establishment of an alternative Multinational Force.

It is clear that in present circumstances the Security Council will not be able to create this Force, and that the United States' commitment will have to come into play. The issue for decision is whether the United States itself should be prepared to participate with military forces in a Multinational Force. We have now had an initial round of discussions with the two sides and it is apparent that the question of whether or not the United States will participate is crucial to the way the two sides view the size and structure of the Force, and how it would carry out its functions. It is at the heart of Israeli confidence in such a Force. We therefore need an early decision concerning U.S. willingness to participate. In taking this decision, we need also to consider how an American troop presence in Sinai relates to our overall strategic approach to the region.

How a U.S. Decision Relates to the Negotiations

The Israelis attach the highest importance to U.S. participation in the Force, and we know from our initial round of discussions that the Egyptians now also are prepared to see the U.S. participate militarily, provided we can get other nations to do so too. The question of a U.S. role in the Force is so crucial to Israeli decision-making on the size of the Force, how it is structured, and how it should relate to the parties, that we cannot proceed further without a decision on this question. For example, the Israelis take the position that if the U.S. participates, the Force would not have to have more than 2,000 troops; if it does not, they want the Force to number at least 4,000.

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The second point is that the logical next step is to make approaches to other governments to see if they are willing to participate in the Multinational Force. One of the first things these governments will want to know is whether the U.S. is prepared to contribute troops. If we make these approaches without being able to convey a clear position about our own role, we are only likely to get evasive responses.

A prompt decision is important. Both sides have asked us to get on with these negotiations as quickly as possible with a view to having an agreement by late spring, or early summer by the latest. We need to keep up momentum in the negotiations. The Israelis are particularly concerned that if the negotiations drag on their schedule for an orderly withdrawal could be affected (they have made it clear that they will not complete their withdrawal unless a Force is in place). We are scheduled to have another round of discussions with the parties later this month preparatory to Secretary Haig's Middle East trip next month.

Relationship to Our Strategic Plans

The Israelis would like to see a U.S. military presence in Sinai with a dual purpose--one that could act both to carry out the Treaty peacekeeping functions and serve as part of our strategic force structure in the region. In this event, they would be happy to keep the facilities intact at the two major air bases in Sinai and turn them over for our use. The Egyptians, however, are extremely sensitive to any implication that they are giving the U.S. a "base" in Sinai. It is conceivable that Sadat might be turned around on this if the President were to make it a crucial point in our relationship, but the odds are against it. While it may become possible over the course of time to obtain Egyptian agreement to our presence having a broader regional role, in our judgment it would be unwise for us to press for this objective in the context of the present negotiations. To do so would only harden Egyptian resistance to a U.S. role, impede the negotiations for a peacekeeping force, and impose strains on the U.S.-Egyptian relationship.

Size and Structure of the Force

On the assumption that the United States will be able to contribute a contingent to the Multinational Force, the basic components of such a Force would be two light infantry battalions, with an aviation support company, a group of military observers to carry out the verification functions specified in the Treaty, and a small coastal patrol capability to verify that there is no interference with free navigation

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in the Strait of Tiran. Overall this would be about 2,000 men. If the United States decides to participate, we need to decide which elements of the Force we are prepared to provide. The Israelis consider it important that the infantry battalion at Sharm el-Sheikh (overlooking the Strait of Tiran) be American. In addition, the Israelis would be happy if the Americans provided the aviation support company. On the other hand, the Egyptians are sensitive to too prominent a United States role, particularly American use of the airfields since this would begin to look as if they had made a base available to us.

If the U.S. participates in this fashion we would hope to get a third-world country, such as Nepal, to provide the other battalion; either the Australians or the Canadians to provide logistics and communications, as well perhaps as the group of military observers; and possibly a Latin American country, such as Ecuador, to provide the coastal patrol facility. The U.S. would also continue to conduct high-level U-2 photographic reconnaissance of the Sinai to supplement the Force's verification capability.

Funding

The Pentagon estimates that a two battalion Force of the kind described above would cost about \$60 million a year including start-up costs, on the assumption that the Israelis will leave intact facilities that the Force, with Egyptian agreement, could use. We have proposed to the parties a three-way split for financing; we consider it important that the principle be maintained that the parties themselves contribute a fair share of the costs. This will also be an important selling point to the Congress. If we can make the three-way split stick, our contribution would be on the order of \$20 million, only slightly more than we are presently paying for the Sinai Field Mission.

Consultations With Congress

A decision to participate will of course require the approval of Congress. New statutory authority will be required, but what precise form this should take is probably best determined after consulting the Committee Chairman and key Administration friends on the Hill. In the meantime we have kept both the Senate and House Middle East subcommittees informed about our talks with the parties.

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Implications

If a negative decision is reached about U.S. military participation, we may have great difficulty in persuading others to participate in the Force. And if we fail on this front, we would be thrown back on an expanded civilian-type presence of the Sinai Field Mission as the only way we could discharge the commitment of the Carter letter. It is moot whether the Israelis would consider this an adequate fulfillment of the Carter commitment (Dayan, for example, has signalled that he would oppose any arrangements that did not emplace a "force"--as opposed to observers--at Sharm al-Shaikh). Thus, if we cannot provide a force, there is a strong possibility the Israelis would refuse to carry out their final stage of withdrawal, which in turn would create a major crisis in the Egypt-Israel peace.

On the other hand, we must be fully aware of the far-reaching implications of a positive decision, and can expect to be questioned sharply in Congress about them. Perhaps the most significant is the open-ended nature of our commitment. There is no specified duration for the life of the Force, and we would have to expect that, once having agreed to contribute troops, we would not be able to withdraw without creating a severe loss of Israeli confidence in the Force. We hope to have the agreement setting up the Force specify that the creation of a United Nations Force mandated by the Security Council remains the ultimate objective since this is what is called for in the Treaty. But we can have no confidence that the Security Council will be in a position to act in the foreseeable future.

A second implication we must weigh is the precedent this may establish for U.S. involvement in and responsibility for peacekeeping arrangements on other fronts of the Arab-Israel conflict if and when settlements are reached there. If we participate in Sinai, it will be more difficult to insist on some other type of supervisory mechanism such as a UN operation elsewhere; the Israelis in particular will want U.S. involvement. On the other hand, the case can be made that it would probably be impossible to achieve a comprehensive settlement in the Arab-Israeli conflict in any case unless the U.S. is willing to play this kind of role.

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Egyptian Views on the Sinai Security Negotiations

- I. Egypt prefers a small, limited and low visibility peacekeeping force in the Sinai. President Sadat's key concern is that the force not appear to impinge on Egyptian sovereignty. He has told the Egyptian people that they are regaining full control over the Sinai but his Arab enemies argue that Israel and the US will retain real control in the peninsula.
 - A. Foreign Minister Ali said on 11 March that the force should "not exceed 2,000 personnel" and "will not be permanent."
 - B. The Egyptians note that the Sinai observer force must also monitor the level of Israeli military forces in Zone D along the Israeli-Egyptian border.
 - C. Cairo prefers a UN mandate for the peacekeeping force and wants the US to sound out the Security Council.
 - D. Egypt has already sounded out some traditional UN peacekeeping force donors including Nepal and will raise the issue with the Scandanavian countries during Ali's visit to Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark later this month.
- II. Sadat has publicly ruled out allowing the US use of the Sinai airfields. He has offered the US use of Egyptian military "facilities" elsewhere for the Rapid Deployment Force, but

has rejected providing the US with base rights or an access agreement for any military facility in Egypt.

- A. Sadat already faces domestic opposition to his offer to provide the US with facilities in Egypt (see attached NID analysis).
 - B. A US presence in Sinai airfields would further arouse domestic debate in Egypt.
 - C. Sadat's opponents, both the Islamic rightwing and leftists, would accuse Sadat of failing to fully recover control of the Sinai.
 - D. Strong US pressure on this issue could provoke Sadat to withdraw his offer to provide facilities elsewhere in Egypt, including Ras Banas airfield.
- III. The Egyptians would prefer to keep the US role in the Sinai peacekeeping apparatus separate from Egypt's cooperation with the US on regional security issues.
- A. Cairo is extremely sensitive to any indication that Egypt is cooperating with Israel on regional security issues, especially while the Palestinian issue remains unresolved.
 - B. Sadat may fear that his recent limited success in establishing discreet contacts with the Iraqis and other Arabs would be undermined if the US gained a major presence in the Sinai.

- I. Israel wants a peacekeeping force with sufficient size, military capability and mandated authority to carry out frequent, detailed inspections, to make the signatories to the Sinai security agreement fully and quickly aware of any violations and to seek their immediate correction.
- A. With respect to the makeup of the force, Israel wants:
1. troops drawn either exclusively from the US or else from the US and other nations having diplomatic relations with Israel and Egypt;
 2. verification teams to carry out frequent inspections of Zones A and B and permanent observation posts to help monitor Egypt's compliance with peace treaty provisions requiring demilitarization of Zone C;
 3. freedom of movement for verification teams in coordination with liaison officers and with prior notification in Zones A and B and unlimited freedom of movement for verification teams in Zone C;
 4. a naval force of light patrol boats to ensure freedom of navigation through the Strait of Tiran and Gulf of Aqaba;
 5. a reserve force to provide troop reinforcement in case of an emergency.
- B. The Israelis additionally have specified that:
1. the peacekeeping force should report its inspection findings at least once a week to Israel and Egypt and

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any violations should be reported to the headquarters of the force and necessary corrections obtained within 48 hours; representatives of the peacekeeping force should be allowed to witness Egypt's implementation of corrective measures:

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3. the peacekeeping force should be deployed no later than one month before Israel's final Sinai withdrawal, which is required by April 1982, in order to assure that there are no gaps in coverage.

II. Senior Israeli military authorities have emphasized that agreement on the peacekeeping force or at least major progress toward conclusion of the Sinai security negotiations should be made as early as possible--certainly well before the end of 1981--in order to head off major Israeli domestic political problems.

- A. Delay in the negotiations could convey the impression to some of the approximately 5,000 Israeli settlers still living in Israeli's 18 Sinai settlements that they may be able to drag out or even avoid compliance with peace treaty provisions requiring their evacuation.
- B. Inconclusive negotiations also could encourage intensified political activity by hardliners in Prime Minister Begin's Likud bloc--such as Knesset foreign

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in other parties who will be looking for pretexts for Israel to negate its treaty obligation to withdraw from all of the Sinai.

III. Indeed, no Israeli government--whether led by Begin's Likud or by Labor, should Labor win the 30 June national election--is likely to complete Israel's withdrawal without having in hand a negotiated agreement fully meeting Israel's security requirements and acceptable to the Knesset and Israeli public.

A. Begin himself, during a recent press conference, referred to establishment of a peacekeeping force as an "integral part of the peace treaty," thus intimating his unwillingness to order Israel's final Sinai withdrawal in the absence of such a force.

B. Former Foreign Minister Dayan tabled a draft Knesset bill in early March that would require parliamentary approval of any future Israeli-Egyptian Sinai security agreement before Israel's final withdrawal.

1. Dayan's bill has attracted widespread public and Knesset support and has been referred to Arens' committee for further consideration.